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Betsy Eakins, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Capitol Region Mental Health Center
SEIU District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Betsy Eakins. I am Licensed Clinical Social Worker and I have worked for the State of Connecticut for 32 years. Currently, I work at Capitol Region Mental Health Center. I am here to express my continued concerns regarding mental health and addiction services in the State of Connecticut and the need to fund these services effectively.

As a State employee of 32 years I am well aware of the diminishing funds allocated for continued State services through DMHAS and the expectation of many that these should continue to be cut and slashed to alleviate financial strain. State employees today are in many ways the scapegoats of errors from many years ago and continue to be unjustly regarded by many citizens as the "fat cats" of Connecticut.

Having worked as a psychiatric social worker for many years with DMHAS I can only say that we continue to strive to provide a safety net for the most profoundly impaired, persons with severe and prolonged mental illness often complicated by the pseudo-relief of illicit drugs. Assertive outreach and crisis services are not "money making" endeavors and do not seem to be adequately addressed through our private non-profit partners. In fact, our private non-profit partners are not well funded either so we end up with a "Rob Peter to pay Paul" situation and the people who need our services the most are the ones who get left behind.

Private non-profits strive to duplicate our work but are not adequately funded either and often times result in worse conditions for workers and eventually refer their higher acuity clients back to DMHAS while continuing to advertise themselves as providers of all things for all people. Someone in this line of work shouldn't have to work three jobs to make ends meet. That is not healthy, and unfortunately is what happens when you underfund mental health services in CT.

We offer hope to those most in need but in order to do this work to the best of our abilities, we need expansion/re-instatement of crisis services as well as assertive treatment teams throughout the State to reach out to those who remain in the shadows struggling to make sense of it all, having not only continued their own struggles alone many times but also bringing great distress to their families.

Thank you for your time.